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May 28, 1971

Mrs. Murriel M. Morse  
General Manager Personnel Dept.  
Civil Service Commission  
Room 400, City Hall South  
Los Angeles, California

Re: Appointment of De Wayne A. Wolfer

Dear Mrs. Morse:

A request is hereby made by the undersigned for a hearing before the Civil Service Commission as to the qualifications of the above named person to act as head of the Los Angeles Police Department Scientific Investigation Division Crime Laboratory.

It is my understanding that Mr. Wolfer is now acting head on a temporary basis for said laboratory, and that his appointment is due to become final July 1st. My belief that Mr. Wolfer is completely unqualified for the position is supported by the following considerations:

(1) There are numerous fundamental precepts upon which the science of firearms identification is based. All criminalists and firearms examiners must abide by the precepts and disciplines of their profession. Six of these precepts, which Mr. Wolfer has violated, are listed below:

Precept (1) The positive identification of an evidence bullet as having been fired from a particular gun and no other must be based on a comparison of the evidence bullet with a test bullet recovered from the same evidence gun and no other.

Precept (2) The most accurate and reliable determination of the approximate distance between muzzle and victim (excluding contact) based on powder pattern distribution must be made with the actual evidence gun and no other. It is also important to use the same make and type of ammunition, preferably from the same batch or lot number. (When the evidence gun is not available, a similar gun may be used but the validity of the test is always more questionable.)

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Precept (3) The land and groove dimensions (part of the rifling specifications) may be identical or nearly identical between different firearms manufacturers.

Precept (4) Very similar copper coatings are used on many different makes of lead revolver bullets.

Precept (5) CLASS CHARACTERISTICS as shown by the rifling impressions on a fired bullet play absolutely no role in the identification of such a bullet as having been fired from one particular gun out of the entire world population of guns having the same class characteristics.

Precept (6) A single land of the rifling of a firearm can produce only one land impression on a fired bullet.

These precepts are expressions of basic common sense and are universally accepted. They are truisms in the same sense, for example, that the assertion "a single blade of a plow can cut only one furrow as it moves over the ground" is a truism. The violations of the above precepts by Mr. Wolfer will be pointed out briefly in two of the three cases abstracted herewith.

(2) CASE NO. 1. (SC# A222633) In this case Mr. Wolfer testified he had made a positive identification of the defendant's gun as the murder weapon. In making this identification Mr. Wolfer produced in evidence enlargements of ballistic comparison photomicrographs to support his testimony. A very thorough study of these photographs and the evidence bullets disclosed, however, that Mr. Wolfer had matched a single land impression on the test bullet with TWO different land impressions 120 degrees apart on the fatal bullet. This amounts to saying that a single blade of a plow cuts TWO furrows in the ground over which it moves - an obvious impossibility. His procedure and testimony are thus a clear-cut violation of Precept (6) and completely invalidates the identification of the defendant's gun as the murder weapon.

Mr. Wolfer also violated Precept (5) by indicating certain CLASS CHARACTERISTICS as part of the proof of "matching" between test and fatal bullets.

His testimony combined with his very esoteric photographic manipulations label his work in this instance nothing but perjury.

- Exhibits substantiating these statements are in my possession.

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(3) CASE NO. 2. (SC# A233421) In this case Mr. Wolfer violated Precepts (1), (2), (3) and (4). He testified that the defendant's gun (Serial No. H53725) and no other was the single murder weapon which had fired three bullets into the bodies of three of the victims. The physical evidence, however, upon which his testimony was based established that the three above mentioned evidence bullets removed from victims were fired, not from the defendant's gun but in fact from a second similar gun with a Serial No. H18602. The only possible conclusion that must be reached is that two similar guns were being fired at the scene of the crime. Such a conclusion then leads unavoidably to the question: Which of the two guns fired the single fatal bullet? The presence of the second gun is firmly established in Exhibits A and B attached hereto which are photographs of Court Exhibit 55. This court exhibit is an envelope containing the test bullets which Mr. Wolfer matched with the three evidence bullets mentioned previously. The inscription on the envelope shows that the enclosed test bullets were fired from gun No. H18602 and not from the defendant's gun No. H53725. This is a violation of Precept (1).

Although the inscription on this envelope shows that gun No. H18602 was physical evidence in this case on June 6, 1968, the gun was reportedly destroyed by the Los Angeles Police Department roughly one month later in July, 1968. This is shown in the teletype report of Exhibit C attached.

Substantiating details of the other violations by Mr. Wolfer can be made available.

I find it very hard to believe that a man of the professed expertise of Mr. Wolfer could violate four of the basic precepts of his profession in a single case by sheer accident. I am more inclined to believe that these violations were made in response to an over-zealous desire to help the cause of the prosecution. The choice seems to be rank incompetence on the one hand or morbid motivation on the other.

(4) CASE NO. 3. (SC# A234557) While Mr. Wolfer did not violate any of the above cited Precepts, his handling of the physical evidence amounted to scurrilous tampering. In a vain attempt to make the physical evidence support the prosecution's theory of the murder, he made physical alterations of certain inscriptions on three rifle cartridge cases which were items of prosecution evidence. Please see

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Exhibits D, E and F, attached herewith. These photographs show that a total of 15 characters have been altered on the three cartridge cases. Some of these alterations were made during the course of the trial. Mr. Wolfer admitted that he had made alterations on one of the cartridge cases but denied making any other alterations.

The undersigned has in her possession the documentary evidence to support the above. In addition, attached hereto are three affidavits of criminalists supporting the fundamental precepts as set forth in the above.

Very truly yours,

*Barbara Warner Blehr*  
BARBARA WARNER BLEHR

BWB:sl

cc: Edward Davis,  
Chief of Police,  
Los Angeles

Los Angeles Times

Robert L. Meyer,  
United States Attorney